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# CIA investigates an open secret

WASHINGTON—It's awfully early, I know, but I'm ready to vote on the most lunatic misuse of taxpayers' money by the Central Intelligence Agency. It's however much they spent on infiltrating the Women's Strike for Peace.

Naturally, I expect opposition. Some will feel that since Fidel Castro is still walking around that the untold amounts spent on plots to shoot, poison, or strangle him should retire the cup. I understand, too, that the untimely death of Chicago mobster Sam Giancana, who, for all I know, may have gotten the Secret Federal Employee of the Year Award in 1960, has greatly sharpened the competition from the Havana division.

But I have a good reason for my choice of Women's Strike for Peace. It is Edith Villastrigo, a woman with iron-gray bangs and thick glasses who bears the grand title of local coordinator for W.S.P., but who is actually in charge of badgering the press. No one in memory has done it better.

WHEN I PONDER the fact that federal funds were used so that some agent could find out what Edith Villastrigo was thinking, my mind stops. It is virtu-

Vernon Jarrett is on vacation.

ally impossible not to know what Edith is thinking.

Besides the 7 a.m. phone calls at home—"the most marvelous monk is coming in from Saigon"—it is hard for me to remember a mail delivery during the entire Viet Nam period that has not brought some nugget from Edith, some exhortation to tell the world about a new outrage.

The Women's Strike for Peace was founded in 1961 to oppose the nuclear arms race. The joke around the headquarters is "a funny thing happened to us on the way to a test-ban—the Viet Nam war."

It should be noted here that the press releases issued under the Villastrigo imprint come typed in all caps on flimsy paper. W.S.P. doesn't have a mimeograph machine. They did once, but it was stolen. Edith gets an occasional crack at the machine of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, coterminants at the Maryland Avenue headquarters of W.S.P.

The matter is of interest because the rationale of CIA's illegal domestic surveillance was the suspicion that peace groups in this country might be getting financial help from foreign countries. If W.S.P. had an alien sponsor, the CIA agent must have thought it was one of exceptional chintziness.

was W.I.L.P.F. not infiltrated? There are certain wry, wounded feelings on that score. Finding oneself spied upon in the Rockefeller commission report has become the new chic, comparable to being on the Nixon enemies list.

Now we come to the CIA agent. It had to be a woman. I hope she had good feet, trailing Edith on her unending round of vigils, sit-ins, meetings, protests, marches—not to mention her inevitable front-row appearances at every congressional hearing relating to the funds, morality, arming, and ending of the war, and the towing-around of Vietnamese dissidents—would require uncommon stamina in a spy.

I wonder how she stood up to Edith's unceasing, low-voiced, inexorable arguments. Maybe she had to dash back to the Langley, Va., CIA headquarters every night for a hawk pill. Maybe she asked for reassignment. I would like to talk to her sometime.

Characteristically, Edith dashed off a release the minute she heard that the CIA had been watching her. It was on the usual flimsy paper, but there was underlying the usual indignation a note of content:

"What did the CIA expect to find out when they infiltrated our meetings—that we opposed the nuclear arms race, that we opposed the Indochina war, that we supported the young men who refused in good conscience to fight that war—they could have read our publicity for that kind of information."

Edith would not admit to being pleased. She was too busy composing a letter to CIA Director William E. Colby demanding to know how much of the taxpayers' money was poured into infiltrating the open meetings of the W.S.P. demanding to know if they are still being spied on.

Now that the long Viet Nam detour is over, the strike is back on the main highway of agitating against the nuclear arms race. They expect a long battle.

EDITH THINKS it may get rough. She has never been arrested despite her participation in so many events disapproved of by her government.

"I was always the one who was sent out to tell the press we weren't going to move," she explains.

She is not tired or discouraged. She was born in Russia, brought to Washington as a child, attended local school and was studying to be a laboratory technician when she decided to try to save the world instead. She is married to a retired steelworker, who, fortunately, dotes on activists.

She believes that the American people, when given the facts, will always find the right decision. She even thinks they may get around to closing down the CIA.